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*The Violence of Man subservient to the
Government of GOD.*

A
S E R M O N

Preached before the
UNIVERSITY of OXFORD,
At St. MARY's CHURCH,
On Friday, February 17. 1758.

Being a Day appointed, by Royal Proclamation,
to be kept as a General FAST, on Occasion
of the present WAR against FRANCE.

By GEORGE FOTHERGILL, D.D.
Principal of St. Edmund Hall.

Published at the Request of Mr. VICE-CHAN-
CELLOR, and the HEADS of HOUSES.

O X F O R D,

Printed at the UNIVERSITY Press, for DANIEL
PRINCE; and Sold by Mr. RIVINGTON in
St. Paul's Church-Yard London, Mr. THURL-
BOURN in Cambridge, and Mr. LEAKE in Bath.

M DCC LVIII.

138-2

The Violence of Man, Injurious to the
Government of God.

A

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Imprimatur,

THO. RANDOLPH,

Vice-Can. Oxon.

Feb. 27. 1758.



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New-street, near St. Dunstons Church.

MDCCLVIII.

ISAIAH XLII. 24.

Who gave Jacob for a Spoil, and Israel to the Robbers? Did not the LORD, He, against whom we have sinned?

AMONG many important Advantages recommending the inspired Writings of the Old as well as the New Testament to our attentive Perusal, This is none of the least considerable; That, whilst they present us with an *History* of Providence in ancient Times, they abound with *Observations* upon particular Occurrences which may be usefully *applied* by all succeeding Ages. Erroneous Applications indeed may be, and have been, made of some Transactions there recorded, relating to a *peculiar People*; where neither should every Interposition on GOD's Part be an Object of general Expectation, nor every Proceeding on Their's be drawn into general Example. Yet the Accounts there given of many remarkable Changes in the Fortunes of that People, especially where we have the Declarations of their *Prophets and Righteous Men* concerning them, were undoubtedly *written for our Learning*. And, as GOD is not the GOD of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also; such Passages of Scripture may, at this Day, be *profitable* to other

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Nations,

Nations, *for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.*

I wish we had less Occasion thus to apply the Passage before Us, in reference either to the *Injuries* we have lately been permitted by the Almighty to suffer from the Invaders of our National Rights, or to the *Provocation* we have given Him to chastise us by their Means. However, of our past Sufferings, or our present Dangers, let every one judge as he sees Cause; provided only that he judge impartially and in the Fear of GOD. For we may be, and perhaps we sometimes are, ready to think too unfavourably of the Circumstances of our Country; and, though not to be *afraid where no Fear is*, yet to be afraid beyond what our Case really requires: Which may be at once our Misfortune and our Fault: Our Misfortune, should it *betray Those Succours which Reason* might otherwise offer: Our Fault, should it make us unreasonably querulous against our Superiours, or too rash in our Censures upon our Country-men; but especially should it render us less thankful than we ought to be to our supreme Protector, for having hitherto exempted Us of this Land, if not from bearing a Share in the Burdens of War, yet from personally feeling Those direful Effects of it, under which Many Others even now groan. But, though our Situation may not yet be desperate enough to justify an unmanly Dread, it is surely too alarming to excuse an irreligious Security. A State of War with a powerful Enemy cannot, under the most favourable Appearances

ances, be free from Danger. And, if we find our Prophet elsewhere denouncing a ^a *Wo* against Some in his Days, who appear not 'till afterwards to have smarted under any extraordinary Chastisement, because *the Harp and the Viol, the Tabret and Pipe, and Wine, were in their Feasts, whilst they regarded not the Work of the LORD, nor considered the Operation of His Hands*; how much more provoking must the same luxurious and profane Course of Life be under the actual Inflictions of His Vengeance. That War in particular is one of these Inflictions, and such an one as calls for a more serious Frame of Mind, we may (without citing other Passages) sufficiently learn from the Words following my Text: Where the *Prophet*, having intimated the Reason why GOD had given Jacob *for a Spoil and Israel to the Robbers*, presently subjoins this pathetick Complaint: ^b *Therefore hath He poured upon him the Fury of His Anger, and the Strength of Battle; and It hath set him on Fire round about, yet he knew (or duly regarded) it not; and It hath burned him, yet he laid it not to Heart.* A Degree of Insensibility, which might seem hardly credible, did not our own Observation set before us too many Examples of at least an equal Inattention to the same Indications of Divine Displeasure.

To awaken Us from a State of Slumber and Impiety, so little agreeable to our present Circumstances, is one declared End of this seasonable Appointment: In Pursuance whereof, I

^a Isai. V, 11, 12. ^b Ibid. XLII. 25.

would

would take Occasion, from the Passage under Consideration, to offer some Reflections not unsuitable to the State of Things around Us; and then to recommend such farther Sentiments as Seasons of National Danger stand in need of, and such as Days of National Humiliation more particularly require.

Many a Time had *the Enemies* of God's People *oppressed them and held them in Subjection*. And, whichever of their Distresses the Prophet might in my *Text* particularly have in view; We may suppose *Them* full of Enquiries after the immediate Cause of what had befallen them; blaming, as their Apprehensions or their Prejudices led them, either the Direction of their Counsels, or the Execution of their Operations: not without loud Complaints and Expressions of Resentment against the Encroachments, Perfidy, and Cruelty of Their Enemies. The Prophet condemns not such Enquiries nor such Complaints; but from their acknowledged Condition takes Occasion to point out to them such Objects of *Both*, as were at least equally interesting with any of the rest: Of their *Enquiries* — "*Who* had let loose the Violence of their rapacious Adversaries, at the same Time (if such a Case must be supposed) infatuating or dispiriting Those that should have defended them?" And of their *Resentment* — Those Personal Sins, Those National Provocations, that had deprived them of His Protection. *Who* GAVE Jacob for a Spoil, and Israel to the Robbers? Did not the LORD, He, against whom we have SINNED?

Such

Such, I conceive, might be the View of our Prophet in This Address to his Country-men. And, should our present Circumstances be thought to bear any Resemblance to Their's; That we may neither on the one Hand, like Them, by a sottish Disregard of His Superintendence *forget God*, nor *charge Him foolishly* by any injurious Imputation on the other; I shall reduce what the Time will permit me to offer, by Way of illustrating and applying the Doctrine of my Text, under the following General Heads of Enquiry:

- I. *First, Whence it comes*, that there should be among Men or Nations any such *Violence*, as is here supposed.
- II. *Secondly, Under whose Controul*, and to *what Ends*, It is permitted to operate, or produce Its Effects. And,
- III. *Thirdly, To what Uses* the foregoing Doctrine may be *seasonably applied* by Ourselves, on the present Occasion.

I. The *First* of These Enquiries, at it relates to the *Origin of Evil in general*, hath in all Ages been a Subject of much Perplexity to Man's unenlightened Understanding: And It still continues to be a dangerous Speculation to such *Free Enquirers*, as will presume to be *Wise above what is written*. But I have the Happiness of speaking to a *Christian Audience*: And as no Apology will here be expected for having constant Recourse to That sacred Volume, which

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is in all our Hands; so we shall, I trust, be thereby enabled to reconcile, so far as it is needful for *Us* to reconcile, the Appearances now under Consideration, with the genuine Feelings of our own Nature, and with our clearest Notions concerning the All-perfect Author of It.

The Fact supposed is indeed indisputable: There always hath been, and there still continues to be, much Injustice, Rapine, and Cruelty in the World. Scarcely was the Human Race multiplied before Assassination began: For the First Man, whose Birth is recorded, is recorded also to have ^a *risen up against his Brother and to have slain him*. When in Process of Time this *Earth* became replenished with Inhabitants, we are told, that it ^b *was also filled with Violence*: Nor could the same *Flood of Waters*, which swept away the *Old World* one Family excepted, through any considerable Length of Succession deter the Branches of That one Family from mutual Encroachments, Assaults, and Bloodshed. Their Descendants ever since, when at Liberty from all Restraints of Authority, have betrayed such a Disposition to annoy and infest one another, as furnished a *Philosophizing Humorist* of our own in the last Century with some Pretence for his favourite Tenet, that *a State of Nature is a State of War*. Yet, on the other Hand, the Histories of Mankind, under *Government* in every Form, are filled with Accounts so little to Its Credit, that a late *plausible Declaimer* hath ventured to charge This *Artificial*

^a Gen. IV. 8.

^b Ibid. VI. 13.

Society with the Introduction of more and greater Mischiefs among Men, than Those from which It has rescued them. As to our boasted Faculty of *Reason*; too true it is, that, in Proportion to Its Improvement by the Cultivation of Arts and Sciences, Men have ever become more ingenious in *preparing for each other the Instruments of Death*. Nay (which is most to be lamented) *Religion* Itself hath too often been employed in giving Sharpness to Those Weapons, and Force to those Engines, which Philosophy had invented for the Destruction of our Species. Even the merciful * JESUS foresaw and foretold, that *His Coming*, instead of closing former Breaches, would Itself open new Ones among those of nearest Relation. Which Prediction the Professors of His Religion have ever since been too sadly verifying: And We see, at This Day, Some, who call themselves CHRISTIANS, spreading Devastation with as much Industry, as if They were really supporting their Title to That Appellation by *Sending on Earth, not Peace, but a Sword*.

What shall We say then? Are our truly Natural Affections and our unprejudiced Reason, are Civil Government and even Religion, not excepting the Christian, All combined against the Peace, and Order, and Happiness of Mankind? In other Words, *Is GOD the Author of so much Confusion* as we see in the *Moral World*? Or, Are His choicest Gifts to Man the *necessary Causes* of all This Mischief and Destruction?

* Matt. X. 34, 35.

No, surely! Whatever *Inventions Men may have sought out*, let us say, with the *Wise Preacher*,^a “*This at least we have found, that GOD made Man upright:*” He gave him a Degree of Perfection suited to his Rank among his Fellow-Creatures; but suited also to That State of Probation for which he was intended. What his *First Trial* was, and how he fell from his *Original Uprightness*, You all know from the ^b *History of Moses*. And, if we consult *St. James* upon the Origin of ^c *bitter Envy and Strife* in particular; we find Him, not only tracing Its *Descent* from the Frailty of our *Earthly Part*, the Prevalence of our *Sensual Appetites*, and the Influence of That *Diabolical Spirit*, whose Suggestions first introduced this Disorder into our Constitution, and still continue to add Strength and Malignity to it; but expressly assuring Us, that *the Wisdom, which is from above, is first pure then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits*.

And indeed, depraved as our present Nature is, I think we should hardly do Justice to the Author of our Being, should We not acknowledge Ourselves to be, in every Way consistent with the Freedom of accountable Creatures, *taught of GOD to love one another*. “*Do Violence to no Man*,” is still a Dictate of Nature, as well as a Precept of Religion. Our very Instincts are, as it were, retained on the Side of Distress, wheresoever it appears; at least ’till they are hurt by a Number of detected Counterfeits. A

^a Eccl. VII. 29. ^b See Gen. III. ^c Jam. III. 14—17.

State of War is in fact so little *Natural* to our Minds, that to be pleased with the Miseries of others, or wilfully to occasion them, I might say, to neglect the Relief of them when in our Power, is not more commonly than justly called "*Inhuman*:" And I appeal to every Breast not unusually hardened, Whether, *in the Midst of Its Rejoicing* upon the News of a Victory, *the Heart* is not *sorrowful* at the Thought of That horrible Slaughter, even of Enemies, that must be supposed to have attended upon It. Then, as to *Civil Government*: So far is This from being fairly chargeable with the mutual Encroachments and Insults of Men, that it was one great End of This *Ordinance of God*, and is one principal Employment of All who duly administer It, by hindering if possible, or if not by punishing, every Thing of this Kind, to proclaim to Those under Its Jurisdiction, *that They trust not in Wrong and Robbery*. And, whatever Outrages may at any Time have sheltered themselves under the misapplied Name of *Religion*, or have perhaps been consecrated by the much-injured Authority of the *Gospel* Itself; *These* must all have been prevented by a right Understanding, and due Observance, of That amiable Institution; whose Divine Author ^a *came, not to destroy Men's Lives, but to save them*: Which hath opened to our Faith such Views of Happiness hereafter, as well as prescribed such Rules for our Conduct here, as are most admirably calculated to promote *Peace on Earth and Good-Will*

^a Luke IX. 56.

among Men: And, were It but allowed to have Its perfect Work, ^a Nation would not lift up Sword against Nation, neither would They need to learn War any more.

Not that such Appeals to the Arbitration of Heaven are absolutely repugnant either to Reason or Christianity. Nations, as well as Families or single Persons, may have Rights too important to be given up without a vigorous Opposition to the unjust Invader: And such, I trust, are the Rights, in Vindication whereof our own Nation is at present engaged. Self-defence, on such Occasions, is not only justifiable but a Duty; and is indeed then only blameable, when Hostilities commence before Provocation has been given, or are prosecuted by Methods unwarrantable, or are pushed beyond the Bounds of a just Reparation for past Injuries, and a reasonable Precaution against future Attempts of the same Kind. Something, however, is generally wrong in the One or the Other of the contending Parties; and too often in Both. And, when the Sword is once drawn, so extremely difficult is it, if not impossible, to guard against Excesses, or to prevent a Train of Consequences, too many to be enumerated, too shocking to be described; that no good Man would willingly be concerned in the *Beginning of such Strife*, no just Nation would without *good Advice make War*: Nor can we suppose ourselves so constituted by our Wise Creator, as to render such Havock among His own Works unavoidable.

^a Isai. II. 4.

^a *From*

* *From whence, then, come Wars and Fightings among us?* The same Apostle, who proposeth the Question, hath very emphatically answered it by another, *Come They not hence, even of Your Lusts that war in Your Members?* And here, in fact, is the chief Source of that Rapine, for which a Stranger to the Ways of Men might well be at a Loss to assign a Temptation. The Produce of This Earth when properly cultivated, and the Bounties of Heaven when moderately enjoyed, seem abundantly sufficient for the needful Support, the comfortable Accommodation, of All for whom They are prepared. But, though the original Desires, the natural Wants, of Man are few and easily supplied, his imaginary or affected ones, growing in proportion with indulged Appetites and enflamed Lusts, soon become numerous and importunate. Hence, in private Life, *He that maketh Haste to be Rich or Great, can hardly be innocent*: Harmless Behaviour will not answer his Purpose: Meeting with Many engaged in the same Pursuits, he finds, or fancies that he finds, a Necessity for employing either insidious Craft or over-bearing Vehemence; 'till unmoved by Compassion, unawed by Scruples, he considers Nothing as hurtful to another that promiseth Advantage to himself. And hence also, no sooner do States and Kingdoms begin to form Projects of extending their Fame, their Commerce, or their Conquests; no sooner do their Sovereigns affect the Titles of Grand and Invincible; but the tender Senti-

ments of Humanity are made to give Way, nay personal Safety and even true Policy are sacrificed, to their ambitious and unbounded Desires. The Lives, not of Enemies only, but of Subjects, are estimated solely according to their Subserviency to this favourite Passion: Whilst every Nation that presumes to check their Progress, though in Its own just Defence, must expect to feel the keenest Resentment of Those, who have persuaded themselves, that *They are to be placed Alone in the Earth.*

What hath been here said amounts to This: ^a *All that is in the World* — All that Violence of Passion whose pernicious Effects we see and lament in it — *The Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life, is not of the Father, but is of the World.* It is not That reasonable Love of Ourselves or of our Country, which is agreeable to our Nature or implanted in us by Its Author, that produces Those Mischiefs we are here considering: But it is That irregular, excessive, indeed unnatural, Kind of it, which, not content with an equitable Share of the Pleasures, the Profits, or the Pre-eminences of our present State, would if possible grasp and engross the Whole. ^b *Let no Man, then, let no Community of Men, when tempted to commit Wrong or Violence, say, "I am tempted of GOD:" For GOD cannot be tempted of Evil, neither tempteth He any Man: But every Man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Lust and enticed.* Then Lust, when it hath con-

^a 1 Joh. II. 16.

^b Jam. I. 13—15.

ceived,

ceived, bringeth forth Sin; and Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth Death.

Should it, after all, be here urged (and, in an Age of Doubting, what will not be urged?) that as Infinite Knowledge could not but foresee, so we might have expected from Infinite Goodness that It would have prevented, all Those Exorbitances of Passion which produce so much Mischief among Men: Not to detain You with any abstruse Disquisitions, how far Divine Wisdom might, or might not, have prevented every Thing of this Kind, without admitting some greater Defect or Inconvenience in some other Way: (Disquisitions, on this Occasion at least unseasonable, perhaps on no Occasion to be resolved with Certainty, or even pursued with Innocence :) Let us see, Whether the Difficulty before us may not be competently cleared up, by enquiring, as was proposed,

II. *Secondly, Under whose Controll, and to what Ends, the Violence of human Passion is permitted to produce Its Effects.*

Of the various Hypotheses, that have lately been proposed, concerning the *Design* of the Book of *Job*, One (You know) represents the principal Scope of It to have been the early Condemnation of the ancient Notion of *Two* not only distinct but *independent Principles*, the One of *Good*, the Other of *Evil*. And, surely, whatever may be thought of the main Design of the Book Itself, such a Notion could hardly have been more emphatically discountenanced
than

than it *there* is: Where the ^a *Evil Being* is introduced, full of Envy against the Holy Man, at once for his *Uprightness* and his Prosperity, and eagerly bent upon putting an End to Both; yet unable to make him *sin with his Lips*, or without God's Permission to touch the least Part of his Possessions. Whilst, on the other Hand, the *Good Being*, though He authorizes the Adversary for a Time to exercise His faithful Servant with grievous Afflictions; at length *brings Good out of This Evil*, not only to Others by exhibiting so illustrious an Example of Patience and Integrity, but to *Job* himself by ^b *blessing his latter End more than his Beginning*.

And, if we consider the same envious *Spirit* as still *working in the Children of Disobedience*; we shall find the foregoing Representation conformable to the whole Tenour of the Sacred Writings: Which have rendered our Sentiments of God's Super-intending Providence, with regard particularly to the *Evils* that appear in the *Moral World*, more awful and more worthy of His righteous Government, than had ever otherwise been conceived by Mankind.

Give me Leave to illustrate This Point by an Instance or Two.—Very unnatural was the Hatred of *the Sons of Jacob* against their innocent Brother *Joseph*: Nor was the Cruelty much lessened on *their* Part, when They quitted their first Scheme of Shedding his Blood for That of Selling him into Slavery. But, while the Envy and Malice were Their's, the Event was God's.

^a Job I and II.

^c Ibid. XLII.

^c Gen. XXXVII.

And,

And, when, by a wonderful Reverse of their respective Fortunes, *Joseph* in his Turn found These his Brethren at his Mercy; it was from a Strain, not of affected Tenderneſs, but of rational Piety, that He thus accoſted them: ^a “*God did ſend me before You, to preſerve Life: It was not Ye, that ſent me hither, but GOD. —* ^b *As for You, Ye thought Evil againſt me; but GOD meant it unto Good.* Thus again: Equally undeſerved was the Violence of the *Jews* againſt our Bleſſed LORD, and carried to a yet greater Length by Them. And yet we are warranted in ſaying, that the Hand of GOD was in This Tranſaction alſo: So far in it, as that neither His Judge nor His Murtherers could ^c *have had any Power at all againſt Him, except it had been given them from above.* He was indeed by their own voluntary Act ^d *taken, and by their wicked Hands crucified and ſlain: But He was firſt delivered into Thoſe Hands by the determinate Counſel and Foreknowledge of GOD: And, whiſt* ^e *both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and People of Iſrael were gathered together againſt His holy Child JESUS; They were in fact executing, though quite beſides their own Intention, what His Hand and His Counſel had, with a far more gracious Purpoſe, determined before to be done.—* The ſame is obſervable, more directly to the Point before us, in regard to the Sufferings of Kingdoms from oppreſſive and cruel Enemies: Which latter are conſtantly repreſented as Executioners

^a Gen. XLV. 5, 8. ^b Ibid. L. 20. ^c Joh. XIX. 11.
^d Acts II. 23. ^e Ibid. V. 27, 28.

of the Almighty's Orders; to be restrained or employed, and afterwards themselves punished, according to His good Pleasure. Passionately desirous as ^a *Balaam* was of the *Wages of Unrighteousness*, and eager to earn them by *Cursing Israel*; He was too experienced to imagine *he could go beyond the Word of the LORD, to do less or more*: And when, notwithstanding This, he was wicked enough to make repeated Experiments; to the inexpressible Disappointment of a Prince, who would have amply rewarded him, he found himself under a Necessity of declaring, "*Surely, there is no Enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any Divination against Israel.*" Not so, when GOD's Government called for a different Proceeding. Then, *He gave Jacob for a Spoil, and Israel to the Robbers*: He then withdrew His Protection, and left them to the Avarice, the Malice, or the Revenge of their Enemies: In the Prophetick Language, ^b *calling a ravenous Bird out of the East, and him that was to execute His Counsel from a far Country*; using the *Assyrian* in particular for *the Rod of His Anger, and giving him a Charge against the People of His Wrath*; to take the Spoil, and to take the Prey, and to tread them down as the Mire in the Streets. Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his Heart think so: Little is he aware whose Work he is doing, while he is following the Impulse of his own furious Passions; and while it is in his Heart only to destroy and to cut off Nations not a Few.

^a Numb. XXII. &c.

^b Isai. XLVI. 11. and X. 5, 6, 7.

From the foregoing Examples, to which many more might be added, we learn, that wicked Men and wicked Princes are really Instruments of God's Governing Providence. Not that He *makes* them cruel, or *needs* their Cruelties. He could *Do His strange Work* of Vengeance by savage Creatures of other Kinds: But, as there are not wanting in human Shape such as are always ready with His Permission to undertake it; He sometimes thinks fit to allow them an Employment suited to Their Inclinations, and in which He has a Right to make Use of them: Thus, though they will not be *obedient*, rendering them *subservient*, to His Will; and even, while They imagine themselves to be carrying some favourite Point of their Ambition or Revenge, in fact conducting their Operations to the Accomplishment of His own wise and great and good Designs.

"*What Those Designs may be,*" is a Branch of This Enquiry, which must, in *particular* Instances, be entered upon with Modesty, and resolved with Caution: Because the Reasons of God's Proceedings must, oftentimes at least, lie far beyond the Reach of our Penetration. In our *general* Enquiries, however, we may proceed with more Safety; taking the same lively Oracles, which have hitherto directed us, for our farther Guides. And, as These have enabled us to clear the Almighty from the Imputation of being the Author of Man's Violence, while they have taught us to consider Him as the constant Controller and supreme Director of all its Ef-

fects; so will they justify us in assigning some of the chief *Purposes*, for which He frequently permits it to prevail in the World.

And here, it must be observed, that the sacred Writings often refer us to GOD's own *Glory* as His principal *End* in the Dispensation before us. By which, however, cannot be meant any real Accession to His Essential Glory; the transcendent Excellency of which must ever be incapable of Augmentation; but only the Manifestation of His glorious Perfections to such of His Creatures, as He hath enabled to contemplate and adore them. And thus, I conceive, we are to understand what He said unto *Pharaoh*. *"In very Deed for this Cause have I raised Thee up, for to shew in Thee my Power, and that my Name might be declared throughout all the Earth."* *Pharaoh's* Heart would probably have been no better disposed in a lower Station, though perhaps not so thoroughly *bardened* had he been sooner cut off. But then, neither could his Oppression of GOD's People have been so extensive in a narrower Sphere, nor his Opposition to GOD's Authority so notorious under fewer Plagues; neither would the Almighty have gotten *Himself* so much *Honour in the Sight of all Nations* by his unparalleled Overthrow, had not his Life been for some Time continued under such Corrections as, when long repeated, still more and more *barden* Those *Hearts*, which they cannot penetrate. And (without multiplying Instances to the same Purpose) how greatly

a Exod. IX. 16. and Rom. IX. 17.

must

must such a View of GOD's Government enlarge and exalt our Sentiments of His Power, Majesty, and excellent Greatness! Whom all Nature obeys! *Who not only stilleth the Raging of the Sea and the Noise of Its Waves, but setteth Bounds to the Fury of the Enemy and the Avenger!* Nay, Who can let loose all These, still directing their Activity to the Advancement of His own Honour, and *making even the Fierceness of Man turn to His Praise.* — Happy will it be for Us, if His late Chastisements, inflicted by the Hands of our encroaching Neighbours, shall effectually engage us to *give That Glory to Him* by a willing Obedience, which He will be sure to receive from us and all Mankind, sooner or later, whether we will or not.

For, a *Farther* declared Purpose of the Dispensation we are considering, (rather indeed comprehended under the former, than really separate from it,) is the Trial and Improvement, or at least the Preservation, of *Their* Virtue and Obedience, whom GOD is pleased to *exercise thereby.* That Oppression and Violence are often permitted to take Place, by Way of salutary Discipline to Individuals, the inspired Writings will not suffer us to doubt: And we have the same Authority for believing, that whole Countries are sometimes given up to the Ravages of other Countries with the like View.—The same *Holy Arm*, which drove out so many of the idolatrous Nations of *Canaan*, could as easily have extirpated them all, and given His chosen People the uninterrupted Possession of That whole Land.

Land. Or, Their Almighty Protector could have granted them the same *Security* from foreign Invasions at all Times of the Year, which He encouraged them to rely upon at ^a *three particular Seasons of it*. But either of these Exemptions from present Danger would probably soon have exposed them to Consequences still more dangerous. A *Remnant* therefore of the *Canaanites* was left unsubdued by them; ^b *to be for Scourges in their Sides, and Thorns in their Eyes*: Whilst, for the Exercise of their Vigilance, and Correction of their occasional Deviations from God's Law, They were exposed also to the Incurfions of more distant Plunderers. So that, throughout their History, we may observe them, by Turns, Disobeying their Almighty Governour, and Delivered by Him into the Hands of their Enemies; then Brought back by their Distresses to a Sense of their Duty, and Received into His Favour, with Its Consequents, Peace and Prosperity; and even, after having again and again perverted These Blessings into Occasions of Wantonness and Rebellion against Him, as often Recalled to their Allegiance by the same Course of Chastenings, before they were finally abandoned by Him.

But abandoned at last even They were, for their incorrigible Perverseness, to the Fury of the *Roman* Legions; and became a melancholy Instance of *One Purpose* of Divine Providence that yet remains to be here mentioned (co-incident still with That of God's *Glory*) to which

^a Exod. XXXIV. 23, 24.

^b Josh. XXIII. 13.

the unbridled Passions of Men are sometimes permitted to be subservient : Namely, that of Taking exemplary Vengeance upon enormous Sinners, and utterly Destroying such as have filled up *the Measure of their Iniquity*. We may on good Grounds presume, that single Offenders are in many Instances thus punished by the Violence of others. But the Presumption is much stronger in the Case of sinful Communities, *as such* ; upon Grounds that have been so often explained, as to leave me no Occasion for any Enlargement on them. And as little need I multiply Examples to the same Purpose, whilst the still visible Fate of the *Jews*, of which I have just been reminding You, continues at This Day to convey to every Nation under Heaven That awful Warning: "*If GOD spared not His chosen People, Take Heed, lest He also spare not Thee.*"

In what various Ways the Almighty may enable one Wicked Nation to oppress, harass, and ruin Another, it is impossible for us to say, and needless to enquire. But there can be no Difficulty in accounting for the Thing itself. In Truth, a People impious in their Principles and debauched in their Morals must, almost of Course, fall an easy Prey to the first Assailant. They not only renounce GOD's Protection and provoke His Resentment, but naturally disqualify themselves for any manly Effort against real or even imaginary Terrours. Their Counsels will be slow, distracted, irresolute ; and probably no sooner determined than betrayed ; Or, instead of that Vigour in the Execution which
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Success ordinarily requires, with trembling Hands and Hearts failing, They will *turn themselves back in the Day of Battle*, and even *flee when None pursueth*. Their Adversaries will find such a People ready vanquished to their Hands: No uncommon Share of Policy, or Courage, or Strength need be communicated to them, in order to their subduing a Set of Men that have made themselves ripe for Slavery, and are become *Vessels of Wrath fitted for Destruction*.

May the Case, here only supposed, never be our own! And that it never may, at least by any Fault or Misconduct on our Part, let us now go on to *enquire*, as was proposed,

III. *Thirdly, To what Uses* the Considerations already offered may be seasonably *applied* on the present Occasion.

The great Doctrine, which I have thus far been illustrating, is That of a *Divine Super-intendence* over the Proceedings both of single Persons and publick Communities, more especially in Times of *War*: Such a Super-intendence, as, though It always disapproves the *Principle* from which Rapine or Cruelty proceeds, yet often permits the *Acts* to take Place, and for a Time to prevail: Such a Super-intendence, however, as retains the Power of *checking* That Principle, and *controlling* Those Acts, at Pleasure; and, where It allows them the largest Scope, still *directs* their Operations to the Accomplishment of the Wisest Ends: Particularly, the Manifestation of God's Glory, the Exercising of a care-
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less or Chastisement of a froward People, and the final Extirpation of *Those that will not have Him to reign over them.*

Now the foregoing Account of G O D's Providence, like ** the Pillar of Fire* in the Passage through the Red-Sea, whilst in the *Night* of Affliction *it is a Cloud and Darkneſs* to His Enemies, *gives Light* and Consolation to Those, who are so wise as to put themselves under His Guidance and Protection. And accordingly, I would beg Leave, as briefly as I well can, to apply the Doctrine before us to the Uses of *Admonition*, of *Comfort*, and of *Exhortation*: Of *Admonition*, to the *Unthiſking*; of *Comfort*, to the *Penitent*; of *Exhortation*, to *All*.

And *First*, Let the careless and unthiſking be *Admoniſhed* by our late Misfortunes and our present Dangers, to *conſider their Ways*; in order to discover, as far as we may reasonably preſume to discover, *Why* the great Governour of the Universe hath thought fit thus to mortify, and still thinks fit thus to threaten, us.

Self-Examination, whether *Perſonal* or *National*, is a Work peculiarly ſeaſonable in Times of Suffering: And yet a Work, towards which Those have generally the leaſt Inclination, who have the greateſt Occaſion for it: " *I bearkened and heard, ſaith the Prophet Jeremiah at a like ſeaſon, but They ſpake not aright; No Man repented him of his Wickedneſs, ſaying, "What have I done?" Every one turned to his Courſe, as the Horſe ruſbeth into the Battle. Even the Stork in*

^a Exod. XIV. 20.

^b Jer. VIII. 6, 7.

the Heaven knoweth his appointed Times, and the Turtle and the Crane and the Swallow observe the Time of their Coming; but my People know not the Judgment of the LORD. A dangerous Symptom This; and utterly unworthy of such Creatures, as ought to be *wiser than the Fowls of Heaven.* For, though it would be presumptuous and uncharitable, *merely* from the Sight of uncommon personal Afflictions or even National Calamities, to condemn the Sufferers as being *Sinners above All others*; Yet surely, in either Case, it must become the Sufferers themselves to look up to the Author, and to *lay to Heart* the Occasion and End, of such Dispensations. Though other Men's Calamities may not always excuse us in condemning them; Yet our own Calamities will always justify us in *judging Ourselves.*

In which important Work, however, it will not be expected, that our Civil or Military State, our Landed or Commercial Interests, our Foreign or Domestick Transactions, should be taken into Examination in *This sacred Place.* Such Enquiries belong to another Consideration; to which (I am sure) it is as much my Inclination as it is my Duty to refer them, And, as to our Moral and Religious Condition; though Reflections of That Nature more properly fall within the Business of *This Day*; yet, I hope, You will the rather excuse me at present from attempting the disagreeable Operation of laying open the *Wounds and Bruises* and too general *Unsoundness* of our Country in These respects; because *This* hath often, on like Occasions,

sions, been performed by more skilful Hands. Let me only be permitted to suggest, that, if the Situation of Publick Affairs should seem continually growing more and more critical and dangerous: If some important Possessions of the *British* Crown, won by the Bravery, nay purchased with the Blood, of our renowned Country-men, have lately been, in a Manner afflictive enough, torn from us: If our valuable Colonies have greatly suffered, and still continue exposed to yet farther Suffering, from the Incursions, the Ravages, the savage Cruelties, of our inveterate Enemies: If our Counsels at home have been disunited and disconcerted, to the unhappy Loss of irrecoverable Opportunities; whilst our Enterprizes abroad have been generally unsuccessful: If, in Consequence of all This, our Laws and Government with Difficulty maintain Their wonted Reputation in other Countries, and are daily insulted by the lowest of the People in our own: Surely it must be high Time to reflect, Whether We are not exemplifying That standing Rule of GOD's Proceedings, — “^a *They, that despise ME, shall be lightly esteemed.*”

We find it recorded in the *Jewish* History, That ^b *the Anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and He delivered them into the Hands of Spoilers that spoiled them: — So that They could not any longer stand before their Enemies.* The sacred Historian has not, indeed, thought fit precisely to mark out the *Time* of This their

^a 1 Sam. II. 30.

^b Judg. II. 13, 14.

distressed Condition : But He has taken Care, in the Words immediately preceeding, fully to explain the *Cause* of it. *They had forsaken JEHOVAH, and served Baal and Astaroth.* “How *We* stand, as to the *former* Part of This Charge, particularly in relation to the peculiar Object of *Christian* Worship,” is an alarming Thought : And, in reference to the *latter*, with which perhaps we may think ourselves wholly unconcerned ; it should be remembered, that serving *Baal* and *Astaroth* is by no means the only Species of Idolatry or Apostasy, by which we may become *Transgressors*. They, *whose God is their Belly*, or (which is the same Thing) *who are Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of GOD* : They, who *make Gold their Hope, or say unto fine Gold, “Thou art our Confidence :”* They, in short, who *take not GOD for their Strength, but put their chief Trust in Man*, or any created Being : All *These in their Hearts depart or apostatize from the LORD* ; and may on That Account justly look for the Inflictions of His sore Displeasure.

But there is the less Occasion to enter upon any formal Proof of our *prevailing Depravity* in *These* or any other Respects ; because This is a Topick, upon which, so long as we keep to *general* Complaints, we seem well enough agreed. I am afraid, however, such Agreement will no longer continue, when we descend to a more *particular* Enquiry, “*Upon whom* the Blame should principally fall,” or “*Where* the Amendment is most wanted.” If (for instance) we talk with the lower Ranks of Men, we shall probably

bly find These ^a *when they are hungry and fretful*, as ready, as the *Prophet* tells us He found them in *His Time*, to *curse their King* if not *their God*; and, forgetful of every Thing amiss in their own Way of Living, to *look upward* to their Rulers, as the sole Cause of their Distresses, and the Authors of all their Grievances: While Those Rulers, in Their Turn, unmoved by such Complaints to examine their own Conduct, shall too often content themselves with saying, ^b “*This People, who know not the Law, are cursed.*”. Thus again: Too many among Ourselves seem to think we have fully satisfied the Demands of our sacred Function, when we have ^c *shewed the People their Transgression and the House of Jacob their Sins*; with a Zeal, which is indeed highly commendable, where *uniformly* exerted, and by such as shew themselves unblameable *Ensamles* as well as *unsparing* Monitors; but which must lose much of its Propriety and Efficacy in Any, who are visibly *Partakers in other Men's Sins*, while They cry aloud against them: On the contrary, we find *Some* (who may be well-meaning, but whom we must have Leave to think unreasonable, Men,) charging *a great Part of the Irreligion of the Age upon* the Clergy; and even Those, who, if not by Immoralities of other Kinds, yet by ill-grounded Invectives against the Constitutions of our Church, and unmerited Slanders of the Body of Her Ministers, have perhaps most of All contributed towards lessening the Influence of

^a Isai. VIII. 21.

^b John VII. 49.

^c Isai. LVIII. 1.

their

their Pastoral Labours, shall in Time of Danger be most earnest in calling for the Exertion of their Influence, and least candid in their Censures of any supposed Neglect on their Parts. The like *Self-Partiality* might, I fear, be observed in most other Instances. — But, in the mean while, *This*, surely, is a Season, not for mutual Reproaches, but for Universal Amendment. GOD *hath given no Man License to sin*; nor will He dispense with any Order of Men for the Violation of His Laws: And, *if Judgment must begin at the House of GOD, what shall the End be of All others that obey not His Gospel?* — Instead of losing Time, therefore, in debating, Who should be *First* in setting forward a Work, which All own to be necessary, let All cheerfully give their best Assistance towards It. And, let Us of *This Place* (though, I am persuaded, as free from the Contagion as any Part of the Kingdom) be as Exemplary on the present Occasion as We usually are on others: *Looking diligently, lest any Man fail of the Grace of GOD; lest any Root of Bitterness springing up trouble us, and thereby Many be defiled.*

Neither let our Endeavours be slackened from a vain Trust in the Goodness of our Cause, the Purity of our Religion, the Excellency of our Civil Constitution, or even (supposing That could be proved as easily as the foregoing) the equal if not greater Immorality and Impiety of our present Adversaries. The Religious Institutions, and even the Civil Polity, of the *Jews* came imme-

a 1 Pet. IV. 17.

b Heb. XII. 15.

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diately from GOD; *neither had He dealt so with any other Nation.* Yet my Text may inform us, that for *their Sins* GOD *had given them up* to the Depredations and Ravages of Nations, in this Instance at least more injurious, and in many respects probably not less wicked than themselves. And, how weak a Protection the Purity of a Church is against the Impurity of her Members, We may learn from the State of Christianity for some Ages now past, in Those very Countries, where It made Its first Appearance, and where for some Time after It most flourished. The Truth is, the Justness of their Cause must at all Times be a most encouraging Consideration to a *Virtuous* and *Religious* Community engaged in the Defence of it. But the Purity of a National Religion, and the Excellency of a National Government, are really Aggravations of Any People's Guilt, who, by neglecting or abusing these Privileges, have rendered themselves unworthy of their Continuance. And, how little Room We have to boast, how much to dread, on This Account, must now be left to every one's serious Consideration: It being high Time that I should proceed,

Secondly, To remind You of the *Comfort* arising to *sincere Penitents*, in perillous Conjunctions, from the Doctrine of GOD's Government over, not only every Part of the material World, but also the unruly Wills of sinful Men, and even the destructive Schemes of unjust Nations.

This is indeed a Contemplation, which the Best of Men must often want, and which may
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always to Such be a present Remedy against Dejection and Despondency of Mind. More particularly, *when we hear of Wars and Rumours of Wars*, well might *our Hearts be terrified*, were the Progress and the Issue solely left to the Disposal of blind Chance or inexorable Destiny, especially were we to *fall into the Hands of Men* only: Men chafed by Opposition, *breathing Revenge and Slaughter*, and whose *tender Mercies are cruel*. But, if these Men are Themselves *in the Hand of God*, whose Displeasure alone gives them Power to hurt us: We may always be sure of disarming Them, if we will but remove His Displeasure by removing the Cause of It, our own Sins. If wicked Men, and oppressive Nations be *Scourges* only, to be employed or laid aside by the Governour of the Universe, when and where He pleaseth; We need no longer be afraid of *the Rod*, than we neglect by a real Reformation to appease the Wrath, and *stay the Hand*, of Him that holds It.

Could we then once see such a general Amendment, what Security might we not promise ourselves from the Attempts of our Enemies; what Success to the Counsels and the Arms of our Sovereign!—And, may we not entertain some pleasing Hopes, at least from the *Rising Generation*? This is neither a Place nor a Season for Flattery. But, I trust, there are not wanting Many amiable Patterns of Virtue and Piety (though, *how many soever They be, the LORD our GOD add unto their Numbers!*) among Persons of superiour Fortune and Rank
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in the Kingdom; of whom several lately were, and (indulge me if I add) some yet continue to be, the Ornament and Boast of This ancient Seat of Learning: Whose *Candles*, when ^a*set on Candlesticks*, may still give *Light to All that are in the House*: I mean, whose shining Examples, when advanced to Those eminent Stations, which They are preparing themselves to fill, may diffuse their benign Influence into the remotest Corners of the Land, and be the blessed Instruments of Providence for recovering Its Virtue, and *lengthening Its Tranquillity*, through Ages yet to come. — Only let me presume at the same Time to express my affectionate Wishes, that These our Growing Hopes, *our Crown of Rejoicing*, whilst They resolutely fly from the Enchantments of forbidden Pleasure and the Poison of Infidelity, may also beware of being *carried away with the specious Appearance of diverse and strange Doctrines*, or with the confident Revival of exploded Errours, or with the dangerous Affectation of uncommanded Auste-rities. May They ever happily *continue in those Things which They have heard and been assured of!* steadily pursuing the *plain Path of God's Commandments*, and immoveably adhering to the Communion of His *Church* into which They were *Baptized*: Which, if not absolutely incapable of Improvement, (as what indeed *can* be so that hath any Thing *human* in it?) is yet, through the Grace of God accompanying Her Ordinances, and helping our Infirmities, suffi-

^a Matt. V. 15.

ciently perfect for the Purposes of Holiness here and Happiness hereafter; and which, therefore, Her Sons, when at any Time tempted to forsake Her, either by the Offer of more *Infallible* Guidance on one Hand, or by the Pretence of stricter *Purity* on the other, may justly address, in the Words of the Disciple to our LORD Himself, *"To whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of Eternal Life."*

In a Word: Corrupt as We of This Nation confessedly are, and discouraging as our Prospects may on that Account appear; *the Faithful* (I trust) *are not so failed from among us*, but that, by their united Endeavours and powerful Intercessions, GOD may yet be entreated for the Land; may hide our KING and our CHURCH from the Gathering together of the Froward; and may, in His own good Time, grant unto His People the Blessing of Peace. In the mean while, to justify such Expectations,

Lastly, From the foregoing Doctrine, considered jointly with our past Miscarriages and our present Fears, let us *All* be *Exhorted* to see and adore *the uplifted Hand* of Almighty GOD; to *bear the Rod*, and with Humility and even Thankfulness *turn to Him that smiteth Us*.

"Whether Those National Disappointments or Losses, which I need not here specify, may be really intended as gracious Correctives and Warnings to us, or as Preludes to our Destruction;" GOD only knows. Gladly would I hope, that the interesting Event may yet depend upon

a John VI. 68.

our own present Resolutions and our future Conduct. Certain it is, that we have needed, and still need, all the Instruction, that such Dispensations are fitted to convey to us. The Dangers, if not Distresses, of which we are daily complaining, with Difficulty prevail upon us to *think upon GOD*, or to part with any of our expensive Amusements, or even to unite in the Use of Means for our Preservation. Had we then hitherto *enjoyed Rest on every Side*, or had we been generally successful in all our Enterprizes; I will not say, whether we might not have been, if possible, more unmindful of our gracious Protector, and more wanton or even brutish in our Gratifications, than we have yet been. Nay, had we even now no foreign Enemy to employ our contentious Humours, I know not, whether we might not with still greater Fierceness *bite and devour one another*, and yet sooner *be consumed one of another*.

May we, however, from henceforward grow wiser and better *by the Things which we have suffered!* We have, I hope, been making our *Peace with GOD*: Let us next *be at Peace among Ourselves*. Let us not disdain to learn from our very Enemies, or to borrow some of *Their* Reverence for Authority and Affection for their Monarch, some of *their* Love of their Country and Veneration for Its Established Religion; in all which respects, our Affairs might not perhaps be hurt by our Emulating Their Attachment, how little Cause soever we may have to envy

^a Gal. V. 15.

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them the respective Objects of it. And, by Way of Return, let us send them back, or at least let us banish from among ourselves, That Fondness for Diversions, That Luxury and Extravagance, by means whereof They have so long already been enfeebling and impoverishing, that They have at length well-nigh enslaved and destroyed, us. Could we but be persuaded in good Earnest to sacrifice our costly Follies, our enervating Indulgences, our ruinous Vices, and our still most tremendous Impieties; and all This, not for a Day only, which will little avail us; but so as to make a lasting Change in our Tempers and our Manners: Could we generally recover That sedate, manly, virtuous, and religious Turn of Mind, for which our Ancestors were once famed, and by which (under GOD) They were enabled not only to carry Terrour into Those Countries, but to bring back Triumph from Those Adversaries, whom we have since taught to view us in a Light less formidable: We might still humbly hope, that GOD *will yet awake for us, and make the Habitation of our Righteousness prosperous*: Since He hath, in very comprehensive Terms, Himself declared (and, I trust, we have not yet excluded ourselves from the Benefit of the encouraging Declaration) “*At what Instant I shall speak concerning a Nation and concerning a People, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: If That Nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from Their Evil; I will repent of the Evil, that I thought to Do unto Them.*”

a Jer. XVIII. 7, 8.

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Wherefore lift up the Hands that hang down, and the feeble Knees. There is, no doubt, a great Deal of Evil, Natural and Moral, in This our World. Let it, however, be remembered, to the unspeakable Comfort of Good Men, that the Effects of Both are under the perpetual Controll and Direction of infinite Power, Wisdom and Goodness. If the *Waves of the Sea* are mighty and rage horribly; yet the LORD, who dwelleth on high, is mightier. Should the *Kings of the Earth stand up, and the Rulers take Counsel together, against the Reformed Religion, and the Legal Government, of our Country; He, that sitteth in the Heavens, can with a Look trouble their Hosts, and blast their Designs; and will, if we secure His Friendship, either restrain the Remainder of their Wrath, or even make it work together to us for Good.* Or — should the Ends of His righteous Government call for some more lasting Calamity upon a devoted People! yet, if our own *Ways please Him, we shall, in all Events, soon be removed into that Land of Rest and Peace; ^a where the Wicked cease from troubling, and where we shall no more hear the Voice of the Oppressor: And shall, through the Merits of our Redeemer, have our perfect Consummation and Bliss, both in Body and Soul, in His Eternal Glory; when our ^b last Enemy shall be destroyed, and Death shall be swallowed up in Victory.*

^a Job III. 17, 18.

^b 1 Cor. XV. 26, 54.

POSTSCRIPT.

P O S T S C R I P T.

Take the Opportunity here given me by a vacant Page or two, to add a few Words on a Point of some Moment, which could only be touched upon at Pag. 29, of the foregoing Sermon.

For some Years past I have with Concern observed it *insinuated*, that the *Clergy subscribe to Articles which They do not believe*. But *This* has lately been asserted in very plain and direct Terms by a Gentleman, who calls himself *Britannicus*, in what he is pleased to entitle *Friendly Admonitions to the Inhabitants of great Britain in general, and to the Clergy of the Church of England in particular*. In his Address to the *Latter*, He tells them, (Pag. 34.) he can't help observing, *that a great Part of the Irreligion and Infidelity of the Age we live in is chargeable upon them: That they solemnly subscribe Articles, which it is notorious they do not believe &c: that the Articles of Religion, to which they subscribe are Calvinistic; whereas, it will not be denied, that the Generality of them, have embraced the Unitarian and Arminian Schemes*. Ibid. In short (Pag. 37.) that they *subscribe Articles, which it is certain, many of the wisest and best of them do not believe*: With more in the same Strain. These are Charges of a very high Nature against a Body of Men, whose Usefulness to others and Comfort in their own Minds must greatly depend upon their Reputation for *Godly Sincerity*. And, whether the Author was aware of it or not, He must, I presume, involve the Teachers of every Denomination in the same Accusation; the *Law* not making, as far as I can find, any Distinction in relation to the Subscription required of *All Teachers* to the *Doctrinal Articles* here meant. And if the *wisest and best* of All These can allow themselves in such Prevarication as himself has here but too justly described, what Profligates the rest must be, he may leave to any of his Readers. However, lest such Assertions should gain Credit for Want of being taken Notice of, it is desired, that the following Particulars may be considered by equitable and serious Men.

1. It has over and over been proved, that the 39 Articles are far from being so *determinately Calvinistical* but that they may *honestly* be subscribed to by Persons not in the *Calvinistical* Scheme. This has been made appear from several Considerations: Particularly, From the plain Meaning of the Articles themselves, when fairly interpreted upon a Comparison with each other: From the probable Views of those eminent Divines who first drew up these Articles, and the professed Tenets of Others, who have ever since been concerned in subscribing and requiring Assent to them: From several Expressions, not only in Those Articles themselves, but in other Offices of the Church (with which

which her Articles should be supposed consistent) that are not reconcileable with the Tenets of the *Calvinists* upon (what are usually called) *the five Points*; and lastly, From the Non-acquiescence of the *Calvinists* in the present Set of Articles, and their repeated Attempts either to get them worded more strictly, or to have others super-added more determinate, in their Favour. All This, and much more, has been abundantly shewn, by many Writers in the last and present Century: In the former, by *Montague* in his *Appello Cæsarem*, *Heylin* in his History of the *Quinquarticular Controversy*, *Playfere* in his *Appello Evangelium*, and (to cite no others) *Bull* in his *Apologia pro Harmoniâ* &c. And in the present Century, among several others, by *Dr. Waterland* in his *Supplement to the Case of Arian Subscription*, and by an Anonymous Writer of an *Apology for the Church of England*, in Answer to an Enquiry into the Causes of the Decay of the *Dissenting Interest*: Which Apology was Printed for E. Midwinter in 1732, and has, I believe, never since been answered. And surely, after all This, we might have hoped to have heard no more of this Calumny, of our subscribing to Calvinistical Articles. But we are so unhappy as to find, that, when Calumnies are likely to answer some convenient Purpose, they are not always discontinued so soon as they are refuted. But,

2. As to what the Author of the *Friendly Admonitions* hath observed of Persons in the Unitarian Scheme, when they stand forth before GOD, and call upon Him to witness to their Sincerity when they subscribe Articles, which strongly assert, that "there is but one living and true GOD: That in the Unity of the Godhead there be three Persons of one Substance, Power, and Eternity, the Father, Son and H. Ghost: &c. Pag. 34, 35; I am extremely sorry, that Any of my Brethren should have given Occasion for his Outcries on this Head: But am fully persuaded, that he is greatly mistaken in his Computation of the Numbers of such Subscribers. Whoever considers, how many excellent Writings in *Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, have been published by Clergymen, within the last 50 Years, some of them very lately in Answer to an *Essay on Spirit* &c. must be surprized at his presuming it will not be denied, that the Generality of them are in the Unitarian Scheme. He himself, I hope, will not say, that All These have been writing, and numberless Others preaching, what They could not believe:—at least 'till he's sure that He is not only *Infallible* but able to *Discern the Hearts* of others; or that he really is (what he seems unwilling to allow the Captain of our Salvation to be) *Equal with GOD*. And then,

3. With regard to Subscription to explanatory Articles in general; We may presume from the Astonishment expressed by this Gentleman (Pag. 37) at the Continuance of This in a Protestant Church,

Church, that he has *not yet* rightly considered that Matter. He talks of the Church as *imposing Subscription*; as if She required it from Any *against their own Judgment and Conscience*: Whereas, though She expects it from All whom She admits into the Office of *Her Teachers*; yet She leaves Those, who cannot honestly comply with it, at full Liberty to employ their Time and Abilities in some other Way. Nor does She make These Articles a *Rule of Faith*: For *That* She refers all her Members to the *Holy Scriptures*. But, considering the *Sense* not the *bare Words* of Scripture as being *That Rule*, She propounds Her Articles explanatory of that *Sense*, by Way of Tests or *solemn Interrogatories* to Candidates for the Office of Publick Instructors; in order to discover, Whether They are *sound in the Faith*, and *apt to Teach* the real Doctrines, of Scripture: And requires *Subscription* from them, as the best *Security* She can take from *Conscientious Men*, that They will *teach none other Doctrine*. As to the *Right* which every *National Church* has thus to provide for the Edification of Her own Members: Had this Gentleman been acquainted with Dr. Rogers's Review, Dr. Stabbing's Rational Enquiry, Mr. (afterwards Bp.) Conybeare's Sermon on Subscription, Mr. Dunlop's Preface to the *Westminster Confession*, or Mr. White's and Mr. Joseph Clarke's later Pieces against Mr. Chandler; He would have found Cause to think the *Protestant Churches* not quite so destitute, as he seems to imagine, of something to say in Behalf of this Expedient, for discharging their important *Trust* by preserving the *Faith once delivered to the Saints*.

Upon the Whole: Who *Britannicus* is, or of what Denomination, I know not. I heartily wish We may All, Clergy and Laity, be the *better* for any *Admonitions* given us at the present Season. But, if his *Intentions* were Good (as I would fain believe from several Parts of his Performance, however declamatory) I fear his Reprehensions will miss of their Aim by being *over-charged*. Whether his random Accusations of all the *Publick Instructors* in the Kingdom, *Authorized* or *Tolerated*, may not be doing the Work of the *Romish Emissaries* who are *Neither*, He will do well to consider. And Others also may please to remember, that Those *Emissaries* can assume *various Characters*; and may perhaps have no Scruple about interspersing here and there a Fling against *Papery* itself among such of their Invectives, under the Disguise of *Friendly Admonitions*, as are calculated to defame and render odious a Body of Men, whom *They* have always found their most successful Opponents, the ENGLISH CLERGY.

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